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25 April RBM

Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Rail Road.

PHILADELPHIA, *February 9th*, 1864.

Hon. Charles Sumner:

DEAR SIR:

No one appreciates more fully than myself the importance of a safe, expeditious and comfortable route between Washington, and New York, and no effort has been spared by the Company, which I represent, to attain that result.

The establishment of a double track between Philadelphia and Baltimore is already far advanced; twenty-seven miles of the second track have been completed; the permanent way has been graded for the additional distance of thirty miles, on which the rails will be laid as soon as they arrive from England, where they were purchased on account of inability to procure them in this country, and the work will be consummated with the utmost diligence.

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The Susquehanna Ferry will be superseded by the erection of a bridge at that point, for which undertaking the soundings and surveys have already been completed, the land for the approaches and the right of way have been secured, a large quantity of stone has been quarried and dressed, two piers have been constructed, one of which was built in water forty-two feet deep, and the foundations of five other piers and one abutment have been prepared. There will be required thirteen piers, two hundred and fifty feet apart, and two abutments. The substructure will be finished during the present year in case the requisite materials and workmen can be procured, and it is anticipated that the bridge will be ready for travel in 1865.

An improved mode of transit through Philadelphia, for some of the through trains, has lately been introduced to obviate the transfer of passengers and baggage from one railroad to the other by street cars or ferry.

This railway connection is temporary in its nature, and although a decided improvement over the previous arrangement, it is designed to be used for a few months only, when the Junction Rail Road will be completed.



This railroad is located on the West bank of the river Schuylkill, and extends from the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Rail Road near Gray's Ferry to the Richmond Branch of the Reading Rail Road, and, when finished, trains will pass through the rural districts of Philadelphia without interruption or delay.

The Junction Rail Road would have been finished during the last year but for the invasion of Pennsylvania, in which emergency the engineers and workmen were sent to the interior of the State to lay out and build fortifications, and, moreover, an extensive earthwork, designed for city defence, was erected upon the line of the railroad, which caused a delay of four months in the work of construction at that point.

A railroad, known as the Connecting Railway, has been located and commenced to unite the Junction with the Philadelphia and Trenton Rail Road, and when finished, the line through Philadelphia will be faultless; in the meantime the Richmond Branch of the Reading Rail Road will be used as the connecting link between the two railroads.

The improvements of the railroad between

Philadelphia and Baltimore, effected within the last year, involved the expenditure of five hundred thousand dollars, while those in progress, to be completed within the next two years, will require an outlay of fifteen hundred thousand dollars more, and then this railroad will be excelled by none in the country for safety, expedition and comfort.

In addition to the improvements of the permanent way, liberal expenditures have been made to provide for the welfare and convenience of travelers, and the equipment and furniture of the several railroads forming the route between Washington and New York have been largely augmented. In common with other railroads, however, the companies have experienced the utmost difficulty in procuring locomotives and cars in consequence of the immense demand created partly by the requirements of the Government.

At an early date thirty passenger cars were ordered expressly for the through trains; these cars were to be built in the most approved style, with every appliance for comfort and luxury and to be delivered early in December, but owing to the scarcity of material and

labor the contractors were unable to complete them at the stipulated time. Nor have they as yet been able to deliver them.

It is the settled policy of the several companies to enlarge and improve their rolling stock and furniture and render their line unexceptionable in all its appointments.

The anomalous state of affairs resulting from the war has produced a marked effect upon railroads. The demand for men for the army and navy has caused a scarcity of workmen, and the enhanced wages of laborers have rendered them indifferent to constant employment. The construction of an immense fleet for naval service, and the rebuilding, repairs and operation of railroads by the Government have withdrawn vast supplies of raw materials, manufactured articles and skilled labor, from private parties.

Engine-drivers and machinists have entered the Government service and their places have necessarily been supplied by men possessing less skill and experience. The loss of so many of these trained men and the substitution of less experienced employes have tended to de-



range railroad operations generally and interfered with their proper management.

The scarcity of raw materials, the demand for railway equipment and supplies, and the extensive employment of skilled labor by the Government, not only augment prices but induce the use of inferior materials and the employment of less skilful workmen in the manufacture of locomotives, cars, rails and equipments.

Such defective materials and workmanship have proved a prolific source of accidents and caused irregularity and confusion in the movements of trains, for which the railroad managers are personally censured, notwithstanding they strain every nerve and lavish money to overcome the difficulties incident to the disturbed condition of the country.

During the year this Company purchased eight locomotives at enormous prices, most of which proved to be inferior in material and workmanship. In consequence of their defective construction, five accidents have occurred within the past two months from the breaking of tires and wheels; some of these mishaps



occurred within a few days after the engines were placed on the road.

On the 23d of December, the western span and draw of Gray's Ferry Bridge were burned, causing a derangement in the movement of trains, and, as a temporary expedient, compelling the use of portions of two other railroads and the transfer of passengers and luggage a distance of a quarter of a mile from one train to the other. The construction of an alternative connection, to serve until the bridge should be repaired, was immediately commenced, and in seven days and nights nearly a mile of railroad was built, requiring extensive excavation and trestlework. During that period, stormy weather prevailed for two days and nights, and Christmas and Sunday intervened, while the men were induced to work only upon payment of double wages for night work, Christmas and Sunday. The re-opening of Gray's Ferry Bridge, which has been repaired, furnishes two railroad approaches to Philadelphia, and in the event of a similar casualty hereafter, the transit of trains to, from and around the city will suffer little interruption.

Before the laborers had recovered from their fatigue and exposure in building the temporary connection, they were summoned to contend with an ice-freshet which obstructed the passage of the ferry-boat across the Susquehanna river, and defied for a few hours all attempts to cross.

No sooner had this difficulty been overcome than a second ice-freshet was precipitated upon us, interrupting for several hours the transit of the boat, and when this impediment was surmounted, the weather became intensely cold, and a strong north-west wind forced the water out of the Susquehanna, causing the ice to form in large masses upon the flats; this ice was carried up the stream by the reflux of the tide, and a considerable quantity adhered to the hull of the boat, causing it to ground in eleven feet of water, although its draught, when loaded, is only five and a half feet. This obstruction resisted our efforts from 2½ A. M., to 4½ P. M., on Sunday, January 3d, when we succeeded in floating the boat and landing the passengers.

The unusual severity of the weather has seriously impeded all railroad operations and

rendered high speed exceedingly unsafe. At such times, accidents are of frequent occurrence, resulting from inevitable causes.

Excessive labor and exposure disabled a number of our best men; the road-master was ordered away by his physician; the General Superintendent was confined to his house, in a critical condition, for a number of days, worn out with anxiety and over-exertion, and several others, whose services were almost indispensable, were absent from duty in consequence of sickness and exhaustion induced by unremitting toil and exposure during the last month or more; while in addition to my own official duties, I was obliged to perform the task of one or two others, although personally suffering from fatigue, anxiety and exposure.

The failure of the mails and passengers to arrive with their usual promptness, and the discomforts to which travelers have been subjected, have not resulted from a want of exertion on the part of the railroads or their officers. In other sections of the country the railroads have suffered with equal severity from the same causes that have impeded our own. In some of the Western States, in con-



sequence of the inclemency of the weather, operations were wholly suspended for several days in succession; the progress of trains was arrested on the prairies by snow-drifts, and passengers were exposed to cold and hunger for hours, and narrowly escaped with their lives, the limbs of several having been frozen.

Numerous accidents of a serious nature have resulted from the breaking of machinery and rails, caused by the inferior quality of materials and the intense cold, and yet these accidents, numerous and severe as they were, escaped the notice of members of Congress, because they did not happen on the line between Washington and New York.

Under ordinary circumstances, a railroad can not be managed with its usual promptness, regularity and comfort in the winter, and especial allowance should be made for the derangement of railroads during the present season, when, in addition to the disadvantages of snow, ice and inclement weather, they suffer from a scarcity of equipments and employes, and casualties result from the inferior quality

of the locomotives, cars, rails and supplies which are now manufactured.

The exercise of vigilant caution, the profuse expenditure of money, and a zealous determination to subserve the interests of the public are baffled by the elements and the disturbing influence of the National convulsion.

It is, however, a source of gratulation that not a single mishap on this railroad has resulted in the loss of life or limb.

In a recent debate in the House of Representatives, one of the members alleged, on the authority of some anonymous individual, that the railroad companies between Washington and New York had practiced extortion on the Government.

This accusation is utterly unfounded, and the company, which I represent, courts the most rigid investigation of its conduct in its relation to the public service.

As early as the month of December, 1860, I anticipated the outbreak of the insurrection, and deeming it impracticable, in that event, to forward troops, for the protection of Washington through the City of Baltimore, I became

convinced that the only feasible route to the Capital would be by the way of Annapolis.

The result of my investigation, together with a map and memoranda bearing on the subject, I transmitted by special messenger to General Scott, at Washington. On the 13th of April, 1861, I again communicated to that officer, the information in my possession, of a plot to destroy the railroad bridges between Baltimore and the Susquehanna river. Six days afterwards, the Sixth Regiment of Massachusetts was assailed on its passage through Baltimore, the railroad Bridge at Canton was destroyed by fire; a train of cars was seized by a lawless band led by J. R. Trimble, now a Major General in the Confederate service, who proceeded to burn the bridges over Bush, Gunpowder and Back rivers, and thus effectually severed all railway communication between the Susquehanna river and Baltimore. Late at night, in company with Admiral Du Pont, and my brother, whom I had requested to accompany me, I called upon General Butler, who had arrived at Philadelphia that evening with the Eighth Massachusetts Regiment, and informed the General that I had received a telegram



from the Mayor and Police Commissioners of Baltimore, requesting me to send no more troops through Baltimore or Maryland, to which the General replied, that "if Colonel Lefferts (of the Seventh Regiment of New York) will join me, we will fight our way through Baltimore." I told the General that, from information received from our detectives, the bridges between the Susquehanna river and Baltimore would be destroyed before he could arrive at Havre de Grace, and urged him to go to Washington by way of Annapolis, embarking at Perryville, for which purpose I tendered him the use of the Company's ferry boat Maryland. I advised him to take and hold possession of the railroad from Annapolis to Washington, and promised to forward reinforcements and supplies. Admiral Du Pont explained to the General that he could land at the grounds of the Naval Academy under cover of the frigate Constitution. These considerations induced the General to adopt the proposed route to Washington, and accordingly his command embarked the next day on our ferry boat Maryland, and proceeded to Annapolis.

Being cut off from all intercourse with the

authorities at Washington, J. Edgar Thomson, Esq., and myself, on our individual responsibility, collected all the available transports at Perryville to forward troops and supplies. Provisions were procured at the expense of the railroad company and sent to the soldiers at Annapolis. Engines, cars, railroad iron, coal, horses, carts, and laborers were furnished by myself and dispatched to General Butler. The expenditures incurred by the Railroad Company, on my personal accountability, amounted to many thousand dollars, and I did not hesitate to inquire whether the amount would be refunded or not. The safety of the Capital was the paramount object.

On the 23d day of April, 1861, I telegraphed to the Governors of Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Maine, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, urging them to hasten forward troops and supplies to Annapolis.

In a letter to me, dated "War Department, April 25th, 1861," the Secretary of War thus acknowledged the value of the services rendered in this emergency:—"I hasten to express my thanks for your energetic, patriotic and prompt conduct, in connection with Messrs.

Thomson and Sanford, in pushing forward men and supplies for the defence of the Capital. Let me assure you that this Department has the highest appreciation of your meritorious conduct, and that the Government will assume, fully, the pecuniary responsibility which you have incurred."

Instead of charging "four times the usual rates for Government service," as has been falsely alleged, this Company, in connection with the Camden and Amboy Railroad, voluntarily reduced the price of transportation for troops and supplies to two-thirds of their usual rates, notwithstanding the business of the Government was spasmodic and generally in one direction only, requiring empty trains one way and a large surplus of cars to be kept in readiness for the public service; so that in reality the business of the Government netted the Company little more than one-third the revenue which would have accrued from its usual business.

After the battle of Bull Run, fearing that communication with Washington might a second time be interrupted, I consulted with Admiral Du Pont and made arrangements to



re-open the Annapolis route in case of necessity, which, fortunately, was not required. This Company, in co-operation with the United States Sanitary Commission, was the first to provide Hospital Cars for the transportation of sick and wounded officers and soldiers, and the success of this humane measure in alleviating the fatigues and hardships of travel and promoting the comfort and welfare of the invalids on their journey, caused its adoption in other sections of the country.

Throughout these troublous times, the officers and employes of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad Company, together with its equipments and entire resources, have, unreservedly, been placed at the disposal of the Government, and the public service has been faithfully performed even to the exclusion of all other business when necessary. No person connected with the Company has sought Government patronage or been interested in any contract or derived a single farthing from the public service. The united efforts of officers and employes have been cheerfully rendered to sustain the Government in its struggle to

maintain the integrity of the country, without any expectation or desire of personal gain or aggrandizement.

I claim no merit for the Company nor its officers in performing the duty incumbent on all good citizens to support the Government in times of trial and danger, nor should I have referred to these matters except in defence of the Company against the calumnious charge of unfair dealings towards the Government.

Since the commencement of the war, a project has been devised to induce the Government to build a rival railroad between Washington and New York.

To accomplish their purpose, the originators and advocates of the scheme have endeavored to excite animosity against the existing route, and the press has teemed with abuse, misstatements and falsehoods.

The non-arrival of the mail at the schedule time serves as a text for tirades against "the Railroad Monopolies;" while a failure of a single train to connect raises a clamor about the discomforts and imperfections of the railway lines. No allowance is made for the severity of the weather, the scarcity of skilled

labor, the prevalence of snow or ice, the ravages of fire, or the inferior quality of the materials and workmanship of railroad equipments and supplies arising from the Government demand and the exigencies of the times.

An impartial investigation of the subject will show that the existing route between Washington and New York is the nearest practicable approximation to an air line, and that more favorable grades are unattainable; that the railroad companies are unremitting in their efforts to serve the Government and accommodate the public; that no expense has been spared to remedy defects and overcome impediments; that improvements are now in progress, which will require the expenditure of several millions of dollars, and that on their completion, the route will be unsurpassed in continuity, comfort and appointments by any in the country; that in consequence of the enhanced value of real estate, labor and materials, a railroad between Washington and New York could not now be built and equipped by private enterprise, for less than fifty millions of dollars; and if constructed by the Government, its cost would be greatly enhanced; that



the projected railroad could not be finished within four years, before which time, national tranquility, it is hoped, will be restored, when the army will be reduced, and business will subside to its natural proportions, affording inadequate support for two railroads. In that case the United States would not only sink the entire capital invested in the project, but be required to make annual appropriations to defray the operating expenses of the railroad and maintain a horde of greedy partisans.

The present route between Washington and New York through Philadelphia and Baltimore is the most direct line practicable. It varies but little from an air line, and that only where such variation is necessary to retain the railroad on fast land and avoid running many miles in the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, through which a straight line between these two cities would pass, from a point considerably east of the Susquehanna river to a point west of Baltimore, a distance of more than forty miles, and would, therefore, be utterly impracticable. The nearest approach, consequently, to a straight line that can be attained is the existing route, passing through Phila-

delphia and Baltimore. Any route avoiding those cities would not only be longer than the present line, but would obtain a part only of the through business between Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, and would prove unproductive to its proprietors if they were individuals, still more so if owned by the Government.

Independent of these considerations, there are other grave objections to the scheme for a rival railroad to be constructed by the Government. With the country burdened with debt increasing at the rate of nearly two millions of dollars per day, and the industry and property of the citizens subjected to onerous taxation to sustain the national credit, it would be unwise policy for the Government to embark in a project of little or no practical utility, and involving an outlay exceeding fifty millions of dollars. If the Government were in a condition to engage in the construction of railroads, the public interest would be better subserved by building the Pacific Railroad and lines traversing the now inaccessible regions of the West and Southwest, thereby opening immense tracts of fertile lands to set-

tlers, and developing their resources to the advancement of the general welfare and prosperity, rather than by building rival railroads through populous districts already provided, by private enterprise, with facilities for intercommunication.

It is not, moreover, a legitimate function of Government to enter into competition with private enterprise, to sacrifice vested rights and destroy capital expended by its citizens upon works of public improvement conducive to the growth, development and wealth of the country.

If a national route between Washington and New York be deemed a public necessity, and it be the legitimate province of the Government to own such a route, it should be the policy of the Government to purchase the existing railroads and establish them as a military and post road. They could doubtless be obtained at less cost than a new line, and would yield an immediate revenue to the Government, whereas the establishment of an independent route would involve the loss of four years' interest upon the capital invested without any income, and would be of no





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utility to the Government in the present exigencies.

Such purchase would be a simple act of justice to the stockholders whose enterprise and liberality have created these public works and whose property it is the duty of the Government to protect and not annihilate; it would also be treating with proper respect the rights and interests of the several states and cities owning stock and bonds of these Companies, from which they derive an annual revenue.

Faithfully yours,

S. M. FELTON,

*President P. W. & B. R. R. Co.*